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THESPIS ON TRIAL.



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75 large-paper copies.*

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THE SPIS ON TRYAL,

OR

**The Moraltie of Playes
Considered.**



Translated out of the Latin

OF

JOHN GEIER,

BY

A. C. Gent.

—
1685.



PRIVATELY PRINTED, EDINBURGH.

—
1887.

△
Tux 416.85-3



In Pursuance of an order of the High Court of Justice of Honestapolis of the 2 day of April 1684, I do appoint John Leadbeater to print the tryal of Thespis ; and do forbid any other person to print the same.

R. LE STRANGE.

THE
TRYAL OF THESPIS
UPON THE INDICTMENT OF
IMMORALITY,
IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE OF
HONESTAPOLIS,

On Thursday the 15th day of March
1684.

Published by Order of the High Court of Justice.

Honestapolis,
Printed for JOHN LEADBEATER in Play House
Lane. 1685.



THE TRYAL OF THESPIS FOR IMMORALITY.



Die Jovis 15 Marti, 1684.

THESPIS was indicted for inciting and leading the lieges to immorality, and the indictment was brought up against him and read the same day: and it was ordered that the indictment should be now read—which was done.

Sergeant.—God save the King. O yes, O yes, O yes! Our sovereign Lord the King strictly charges and commands all manner of persons to keep silence, upon pain of imprisonment.

Mr. Attorney-General.—My Lord, the charge mentioned in the indictment against Thespis, the prisoner at the bar, is that he did, directly and indirectly, from the year 536 before the Christian æra unto the present day, incite and allure men in all conditions of life to lewdness and every kind

of sinful immorality. The prisoner pleads *not guilty*. It is not my intention to occupy the time of your Lordship more than is requisite, so we will call our witnesses, and begin with Mnemosyne.

Mnemosyne was sworn by the Clerk.

A. G.—Mnemosyne, you are, I believe, the mother of a numerous family?

M.—I have nine daughters.

A. G.—Name them.

M.—Calliope, Clio, Melpomene, Thalia, Uterpe, Terpsichore, Erato, Polymnia, and Urania.

A. G.—Where do you live?

M.—At Pieria, in Macedonia.

A. G.—Are you acquainted with the prisoner?

M.—Slightly.

A. G.—He was more intimate with your daughters than with yourself?

M.—Yes; with Melpomene and Thalia especially, and somewhat with Terpsichore and Erato.

A. G.—Have you known him long?

M.—About twenty centuries.

A. G.—What character would you ascribe to him?

M.—In his youth he was generally known as a noble and brave gallant, but in these later times, having joined himself to certain lewd women, he has become naughty in speech and immoral in his actions.

A. G.—Where did he first appear in public?

M.—At Athens, where he performed on a waggon.

A. G.—What reward did he obtain?

M.—A goat.

A. G.—Who induced him to adopt disguises, and cease to speak in his natural person?

M.—I know not.

Thespis.—If my Lord will allow me, I will answer that question myself.

The A. G. objected, but his Lordship overruled the objection.

Thespis.—Æschylus was the friend who added the stage and its dresses to the many charms of my method.

A. G.—We have done with this witness; if Thespis hath a mind to ask him any questions, he is at liberty to do it.

Thespis.—Tell the Court, Mnemosyne, was not acting in common use more than thirty years before I appeared at Athens?

M.—Yes; Sesarion and Dolon played on a scaffold.

Thespis.—Did I harm the commonwealth of Athens, or do it good?

M.—Your influence was said to have been very good, as you inspired the youth with warlike spirit, and taught the principles of true philosophy.

A. G.—With your Lordship's favour, the next

witness is Thalia, daughter of Mnemosyne. We desire she may be sworn.

Thalia was sworn accordingly.

A. G.—Did the prisoner induce you to be guilty of libel at Athens?

Thalia.—Yes, and comedy was therefore forbidden.

A. G.—Who were the principal aiders of Thespis in Athens and Rome?

Thalia.—Aristophanes, Plautus, and Terentius.

A. G.—What was the effect of these writings on the morals of the Athénian and Roman peoples?

Thalia.—The writings of these men instilled virtue into some, but vice into others.

A. G.—When did you and the prisoner come into England?

Thalia.—One hundred and thirty years past.

A. G.—Had any of your family journeyed here before?

Thalia.—Yes. Coventry and Chester harboured a branch of our family called Mysteries. And a younger branch, the Moralities, came over in the year of our Lord 1500, 300 years later, but I did not visit this land till Master Burbage and four servants of my Lord of Leicester began to act plays at the Globe.

A. G.—Was not a lewd stroller named Shakespeare one of this company?

Thalia.—Yes, nearly 100 years ago.

A. G.—This Shakspeare wrote certaine lewd poems, “Venus and Adonis” and “Lucrece?”

Thalia.—He did.

A. G.—We have done with this witness.

Thespis.—Did not this Shakspeare teach that virtue ever conquers vice, and wisdom folly? Did not his plays, like a mirror, return the rays of light to the minds and consciences of those that heard him, and are his plays not inscribed for ever with ineffaceable letters on the hearts of those who have heard them spoken?

Thalia.—This is so.

A. G.—Call Sir William Davenant.

Serjeant.—Sir William Davenant.

It appeared that Sir William Davenant had gone to Drury Lane to unite the two companies, and could not be found.

A. G.—I apply for this tryal to be adjourned *sine die*.

The court adjourned unto the 19 March.

Die Luna 19 Marti.

On the meeting of the court, it was announced by the Attorney-General that the presecution would enter a *nolle prosequi*, and the prisoner was thereupon discharged.

APPENDIX I.

XXXXX

THE STAGE IN ENGLAND.

1625-1670.

(FROM WRIGHT'S "HISTORIA HISTRIONICA.")



Lovewit. Honest old Cavalier! well met!
'faith I am glad to see thee!

Truman. Have a care, what you call me:
Old is a word of disgrace among the ladies. To
be honest is to be poor and foolish, as some think!
and Cavalier is a word as much out of fashion as
any of them.

Lovewit. The more's the pity. But what
said the Fortune Teller, in Ben Johnson's
"Masque of Gypsies," to the then Lord Privy
Seal.

"Honest and old!

In those the good part of a fortune is told!"

Truman. Ben Johnson! How dare you
name Ben Johnson in these times? when we have

such a crowd of poets in a quite different genius : the least of which thinks himself as well able to correct Ben Johnson as he could a country school-mistress that taught to spell.

Lovewit. We have indeed poets of a different genius. So are the plays. But in my opinion there are all of them, some few excepted, as much inferior to those of former times as the actors now in being, generally speaking, are, compared to Hart, Mohun, Burt, Lacy, Clun, and Shatterel; for I can reach no further backward.

Truman. I can. And I dare assure you—if my fancy and memory are not partial, for men of my age are apt to be over indulgent to the thoughts of their youthful days—I say, the actors that I have seen before the Wars, Lowin, Taylor, Pollard, and some others, were almost as far beyond Hart and his company; as those were, beyond these now in being.

Lovewit. I am willing to believe it, but cannot readily, because I have been told that those whom I mentioned, were bred up under the others of your acquaintance; and followed their manner of action: which is now lost. So far, that when the question has been asked, “Why these players do not receive the ‘Silent Woman’ and some other of Johnson’s plays, once of highest esteem?” They have answered truly, “Because there are none now living, who can rightly humour

those parts: for all who related to the 'Blackfriars' are now dead, and almost forgotten."

Truman. 'Tis very true! Hart and Clun were bred up boys at the "Blackfriars," and acted women's parts. Hart was Robinson's boy or apprentice. He acted the Duchess in the tragedy of the "Cardinal;" which was the first part that gave him reputation. Cartwright and Wintershal belonged to the "Private House" in Salisbury Court. Burt was a boy, first under Shank at the "Blackfriars," then under Beeston at the "Cockpit": and Mohun and Shatterel were in the same condition with him, at the last place. There Burt used to play the principal women's parts, in particular Clarinda in "Love's cruelty": and, at the same time, Mohun acted Bellamante, which part he retained after the Restoration.

Lovewit. That I have seen, and can well remember. I wish they had printed in the last Age (for so I call the times before the Rebellion) the actors' names over against the parts they acted; as they have done since the Restoration: and thus one might have guessed at the Action of the men, by the parts which we now read in the old plays.

Truman. It was not the custom and usage of those days, as it hath been since. Yet some few old plays there are, that have the names set against the parts: as "The

Duchess of Malfy;" "The Picture;" "The Roman Actor;" "The Deserving Favourite;" "The Wild Goose Chase," at the "Blackfriars;" "The Wedding;" "The Renegado;" The Fair Maid of the West;" "Hannibal and Scipio;" "King John and Matilda," at the "Cockpit;" and "Holland's leaguer," at "Salisbury Court."

Lovewit. These are but few indeed: but, pray, Sir, what master-parts can you remember the old "Blackfriars" men to act, in Johnson's, Shakespeare's, and Fletcher's plays?

Truman. What I can at present recollect I'll tell you. Shakespeare (who, as I have heard, was a much better Poet than Player), Burbage, Hemmings, and others of the older sort, were dead before I knew the Town. But, in my time, before the Wars, Lowin used to act, with mighty applause, Falstaff; Morose; Vulpone; and Mannon in the "Alchemist;" Melancius in the "Maid's tragedy." And at the same time, Amyntor was played by Stephen Hammerton: who was, at first, a most noted and beautiful Woman-Actor; but afterwards he acted, with equal grace and applause, a young lover's part.

Taylor acted Hamlet incomparably well; Jago Truewit, in the "Silent Woman;" and Face in the "Alchemist."

Swanston used to play Othello.

Pollard and Robinson were Comedians. So

was Shank; who used to act Sir Roger in the "Scornful Lady." These were of the "Blackfriars."

Those of principal note at the "Cockpit" were Perkins, Michael Bowyer, Sumner, William Allen, and Bird, eminent Actors: and Robins a comedian.

Of the other Companies, I took little notice.

Lovewit. Were there so many companies?

Truman. Before the Wars, there were in being, all these Play Houses at the same time.

The "Blackfriars," and "Globe" on the Bankside. A winter, and summer house belonging to the same Company; called "The King's Servants."

The "Cockpit" or "Phoenix" in Drury Lane; called "The Queen's Servants."

The Private House in Salisbury Court; called "The Prince's Servants."

The "Fortune," near White Cross Street: and the "Red Bull" at the upper end of St. John's Street. The two last were mostly frequented by citizens, and the meaner sort of people.

All these Companies got money, and lived in reputation: especially those of the "Blackfriars," who were men of grave and sober behaviour.

Lovewit. Which I much admire at. That the Town, much less than at present, could then

c

maintain Five Companies ; and yet now Two can hardly subsist.

Truman. Do not wonder, but consider ! That though the Town was then, perhaps, not much more than half so populous as now ; yet then the prices were small (there being no scenes), and better order kept among the company that came : which made very good people think a play an innocent diversion for an idle hour or two ; the plays being then, for the most part, more instructive and moral. Whereas of late, the Playhouses are so extremely with vizard-masks and their trade, occasioning continual quarrels and abuses ; that many of the more civilized part of the Town are uneasy in the company, and shun the theatre as they would a house of scandal.

It is an argument of the worth of the Plays and Actors of the last Age, and easily inferred that they were much beyond ours in this, to consider that they could support themselves merely from their own merit, the weight of the matter, and goodness of the action ; without scenes and machines. Whereas the present plays, with all their show, can hardly draw an audience, unless there be the additional invitation of a Signior Fideli, a Monsieur L'Abbe, or some such foreign regale expressed in the bottom of the Bill.

Lovewit. To waive this digression, I have read of one Edward Alleyn, a man so famed for

excellent action that among Ben Johnson's "Epigrams," I find one directed to him, full of encomium, and concluding thus—

Wear this renown ! 'Tis just, that who did give
So many poets life, by one should live.

Was he one of the "Blackfriars" ?

Truman. Never, as I have heard ; for he was dead before my time. He was Master of a Company of his own ; for whom he built the "Fortune" playhouse from the ground : a large round brick building. This is he that grew so rich, that he purchased a great estate in Surrey, and elsewhere ; and, having no issue, he built and largely endowed Dulwich College in the year 1619, for a Master, a Warden, four Fellows, twelve aged poor people, and twelve poor boys, &c. A noble charity !

Lovewit. What kind of Playhouses had they before the Wars ?

Truman. The "Blackfriars," "Cockpit," and "Salisbury Court" were called Private Houses ; and were very small to what we see now. The "Cockpit" was standing since the Restoration ; and Rhodes's Company acted there for some time.

Lovewit. I have seen that.

Truman. Then you have seen the other two, in effect ; for they were all three built almost exactly alike, for form and bigness. Here they had "Pits" for the gentry, and acted by candle-light.

The "Globe," "Fortune," and "Bull" were large houses, and lay partly open to the weather : and there they always acted by daylight.

Lovewit. But prithee, Truman ; what became of these players when the stage was put down, and the Rebellion raised.

Truman. Most of them (except Lowin, Taylor, and Pollard, who were superannuated) went into the King's army ; and like good men and true, served their old master, though in a different, yet more honourable capacity.

Robinson was killed at the taking of a place (I think Basing House) by Harrison, he that was after hanged at Charing Cross : who refused him quarter, and shot him in the head when he had laid down his arms ; abusing Scripture at the same time, in saying "Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently !"

Mohun was a Captain ; and, after the Wars were ended here, served in Flanders, where he received pay as a Major.

Hart was a Lieutenant of horse under Sir Thomas Dallison, in Prince Rupert's Regiment. Burt was Cornet in the same troop ; and Shatterel, Quarter Master.

Allen of the "Cockpit" was a Major, and Quarter Master General at Oxford.

I have not heard of one of these players of any note that sided with the other party, but only

Swanston ; and he professed himself a Presbyterian, took up the trade of a jeweller, and lived in Aldermanbury, within the territory of Father Calamy. The rest either lost, or exposed their lives for their King.

When the Wars were over, and the Royalists totally subdued ; most of them who were left alive gathered to London ; and for a subsistence, endeavoured to revive their old trade privately. They made up one Company out of all the scattered members of several ; and in the winter before the King's murder, 1648, they ventured to act some plays, with as much caution and privacy as could be, at the "Cockpit." They continued undisturbed for three or four days : but at last, as they were presenting the tragedy of the "Bloody Brother"—in which Lowin acted Aubrey ; Taylor, Rollo ; Pollard, the Cook ; Burt, La Torche ; and, I think, Hart, Otto—a party of foot-soldiers beset the house, surprised them about the middle of the play, and carried them away, in their habits not admitting them to shift, to Hatton House, then a prison : where having detained them some time, they plundered them of their clothes, and let them loose again.

Afterwards, in Oliver's time, they used to act privately three or four miles or more out of town, now here, now there ; sometimes in noblemen's houses, in particular Holland House at Kensing-

ton : where the nobility and gentry who met, but in no great numbers, used to make a sum for them ; each giving a broad piece or the like. And Alexander Goffe, the Weman Actor at "Blackfriars," who had made himself known to persons of Quality, used to be the jackal, and give notice of time and place.

At Christmas and Bartholomew Fair, they used to bribe the Officer who commanded the guard at White Hall ; and were thereupon connived at to act for a few days, at the "Red Bull" : but were sometimes, notwithstanding, disturbed by soldiers.

Some picked up a little money by publishing copies of plays never before printed, but kept in manuscript. For instance, in the year 1652, Beaumont and Fletcher's "Wild Goose Chase" * was printed in folio, for the public use of all the ingenious, as the title page says : and private benefit of John Lowin and Joseph Taylor, Servants to his late Majesty : and by them dedicated To the honoured Few Lovers of Dramatic Poesy ; †

* The "Wild Goose Chase." A Comedy, as it hath been acted with singular applause at the "Blackfriars" ; being the noble, last, and only remains of those incomparable Dramatists, Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, gentlemen. Retrieved for the public delight of all the Ingenious ; and private benefit of John Lowin and Joseph Taylor Servants to his late Majesty ; by a Person of Honour.

† In this Dedication is mentioned the following

wherein they modestly intimate their wants. And that with sufficient cause : for whatever they were before the Wars ; they were after reduced to a necessitous condition.

Lowin, in his latter days, kept an inn, The Three Pigeons at Brentford, where he died very old : for he was an Actor of eminent note in the reign of King James I., and his poverty was as great as his age. Taylor died at Richmond, and was there buried. Pollard, who lived single, and had a competent estate, retired to some relations he had in the country ; and there ended his life. Perkins and Sumner of the "Cockpit," kept house together at Clerkenwell, and were there buried.

These all died some years before the Restoration. What followed after, I need not tell you ! You can easily remember !

Lovewit. Yes. Presently after the Restoration, the "King's Players" acted publicly at the "Red Bull" for some time ; and then removed to a new built Playhouse in Vere Street, by Clare Market. There they continued for a year or two ;

singular fact respecting Fletcher. The Play was of so general a received acceptance, that, he himself a spectator, we have known him unconcerned, and to have wished it to be none of his : he, as well as the thronged theatre (in despite of his innate modesty), applauding this rare issue of his brain.

and then removed to the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, where they first made use of scenes: which had been a little before introduced upon the public stage by Sir William D'Avenant at the Duke's old Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields; but afterwards very much improved, with the addition of curious machines, by Mr. Betterton at the new Theatre in Dorset Garden—to the great expense, and continual charge of the players. This much impaired their profit over what it was before. For I have been informed by one of them, that for several years after the Restoration, every whole Sharer in Mr. Hart's Company, got £1,000 per annum.

About the same time, that Scenes first entered upon the Stage at London, women were taught to act their own parts. Since when, we have seen, at both houses, several excellent actresses, justly famed as well for beauty as perfect good action. And some plays, in particular "The Parson's Wedding," have been presented all by women; as formerly all by men.

Thus it continued for about twenty years, when Mr Hart and some of the old men began to grow weary; and were minded to leave off. Then the two Companies thought fit to unite: but of late, you see, they have thought it not less fit to divide again; though both Companies keep the same name of "His Majesty's Servants."

All this while, the Playhouse music improved yearly, and is now arrived to greater perfection than ever I knew it.

Yet for these advantages, the reputation of the Stage and people's affection to it are much decayed.

Truman. Since the Reformation, in Queen Elizabeth's time, plays were frequently acted by Choristers and Singing Boys; and several of our old Comedies have printed in the title-page, Acted by the Children of Paul's (not the School, but the Church); others, By the Children of her Majesty's Chapel. In particular, "Cynthia's Revels," and the "Poetaster" were played by them; who were, at that time, famous for good action.

Among Ben Johnson's "Epigrams," you may find "An epitaph on S[al] P[avy], one of the Children of Queen Elizabeth's Chapel"; part of which runs thus :

Years he counted scarce Thirteen
 When Fates turned cruel,
 Yet three filled zodiacs he had been
 The Stage's jewel,
 And did act (what now we moan)
 Old Man so duly,
 As, sooth, the Parcæ thought him one,
 He played so truly !

Some of the Chapel Boys, when they grew men, became Actors at the "Blackfriars." Such were Nathaniel Field and John Underwood.

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Lovewit. But can you inform me, Truman ! when public theatres were first erected for this purpose in London.

Truman. Not certainly: but I presume about the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign. For Stow, in his "Survey of London," which book was first printed in the year 1598, says :

"Of late years in place of these stage-plays (*i.e.*, those of religious matters) have been used Comedies, Tragedies, Interludes, and Histories, both true and feigned: for the acting whereof, certain public places as the 'Theatre,' the 'Curtain,' &c., have been erected."

And [J. Howes] the Continuator of Stow's "Annals," p. 1004, says :

"That in sixty years before the publication of that book (which was Anno Domini 1629) no less than seventeen public Stages or Common Playhouses had been built in and about London." In which number he reckons five Inns or common Hostleries to have been, in his time, turned into Playhouses; one Cockpit; St. Paul's Singing School; one in the Blackfriars; one in the Whitefriars; and one, in former time, at Newington Butts; and adds, "Before the space of sixty years past, I never knew, heard or read of any such Theatres, set Stages, or Playhouses, as have been purposely built within man's memory."

Lovewit. After all, I have been told that stage

plays are inconsistent with the laws of this kingdom ; and Players made Rogues by statute.

Truman. He that told you so, strained a point of truth. I never met with any law wholly to suppress them. Sometimes, indeed, they have been prohibited for a season : as in times of Lent, general mourning, or public calamities ; or upon other occasions when the Government saw fit. Thus by Proclamation, 7th of April, 1 Eliz., plays and interludes were forbidden till Allhallowtide next following.—*Holinshed*, p. 1184.

Some statutes have been made for their regulation or reformation, not general suppression. By statute 39 Eliz. c. 4, which was made for the suppression of Rogues, Vagabonds, and sturdy Beggars, it is enacted, s. 2 :

“That all persons that be, or utter themselves to be Proctors ; Procurers ; Patent gatherers or Collectors for Coals, Prisons, or Hospitals ; or Fencers ; Bearwards ; common Players of Interludes, and Minstrels wandering abroad (other than Players of Interludes belonging to any Baron of this realm or any other honourable Personage of greater degree, to be authorised to play under the hand and seal of arms of such Baron or Personage) ; all Jugglers, Tinkers, Pedlers, and Petty Chapmen wandering abroad ; &c., able in body, using loitering, and refusing to work for such reasonable wages as is commonly given, &c.

These shall be adjudged and deemed Rogues, Vagabonds, and sturdy Beggars; and punished as such.

Lovewit. But this privilege of authorising or licensing is taken away by the statute 1 Jac. I. c. 7 s. 1; and therefore all of them (as Mr. Collier says, p. 242) are expressly brought under the foresaid penalty, without distinction.

Truman. If he means all Players without distinction, it is a great mistake. For the force of the Queen's statute extends only to "wandering Players," and not to such as are the "King's" or "Queen's Servants," established in settled Houses by Royal Authority.

On such, the ill character of vagrant Players or (as they are now called) Strollers, can cast no more aspersion than the "wandering Proctors," in the same statute mentioned, on those of Doctor's Commons.

By a statute made 3 Jac. I. c. 21, it was enacted "That if any person shall in any Stage play, Interlude, Show, Maygame, or Pageantry, jestingly or profanely speak or use the holy name of God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, or of the Trinity, he shall forfeit for every such offence £10."

The statute of 1 Car. I. c. 1 enacts "That no meetings, assemblies, or concourse of people shall be out of their own parishes on the Lord's Day,

for any sports or pastimes whatsoever ; nor any bearbaiting, bullbaiting, interludes, common plays, or other unlawful exercises and pastimes used by any person or persons within their own parishes."

These are all the statutes that I can think of relating to the Stage and Players. But nothing to suppress them totally, till the two Ordinances of the Long Parliament ; one of the 22nd of October 1647, the other of the 11th of February 1647. By which all Stage Plays and Interludes are absolutely forbidden ; the stages, seats, galleries, &c., to be pulled down. All players, though calling themselves the " King's " or " Queen's Servants," if convicted of acting within two months before such conviction, to be punished as Rogues, according to law. The money received by them to go to the poor of the parish ; and every spectator to pay five shillings to the use of the poor.

Also Cockfighting was prohibited by one of Oliver's Acts, of 31st March 1654 : but I suppose nobody pretends these things to be laws.

I could say more on this subject, but I must break off here, and leave you, Lovewit. My occasions require it.

Lovewit. Farewell, old Cavalier !

Truman. 'Tis properly said ! We are almost all of us now, gone and forgotten.

APPENDIX II.

Customs of the Theatre in the time of Shakspeare,

BY EDWARD MALONE.

(From the "*Drama*," 1822.)

THE amusements of our ancestors, before the commencement of the play, were of various kinds. While some part of the audience entertained themselves with reading, and playing at cards, others were employed in less refined occupations; in drinking ale, or smoking tobacco; with these, and nuts and apples, they were furnished by male attendants, of whose clamour, a satirical writer of the time of JAMES I., loudly complains.* In 1633, when PRYNNE published his "*Histriomastix*," women smoked tobacco in the play-houses, as well as men.

Plays in the time of SHAKSPEARE, began at one o'clock in the afternoon,† and the exhibition was

* "——Prithce, what's the play?

"——I'll see't and sit it out whate'er.—

Had fate fore read me in a crowd to die;

To be made adder-deaf with *pippin-cry*."

Notes from Blackfriars, by H. FITZ-JEFFERY, 1617.

† "Fuscus doth rise at 10, and at 11

He goes to Gyls, where he doth eat till one,

Then sees a play.—"

Epigrams by Sir John DAVIES, no date, but printed about 1598.

sometimes finished in two hours.* Even in 1667, they commenced at three o'clock.† About 30 years afterwards, (in 1696,) theatrical entertainments began an hour later.

Others, however, were actuated by a stronger curiosity, and in order to secure good places, went to the theatres without their dinners. See the prologue to "*The Unfortunate Lovers*," by Sir WILLIAM D'AVENANT, first performed at *Blackfriars* in April 1638.

From these lines, it appears that anciently, places were not taken in the best *rooms* or boxes, before the representation. Soon after the restoration, this practice was established. See a prologue to a revived play in "*Covent Garden Drollery*, 1672.

In that passage Sir JOHN DAVIES mentions *one o'clock*, at the hour at which plays commenced. The time of beginning the entertainment about eleven years afterwards, [1609] seems to have been later; for DECKER, in his "*Guls Hornebooke*" makes his gallant go to the ordinary at two o'clock, and thence to the play.

When BEN JONSON's "*Magnetic Lady*" was acted [in 1632] plays appear to have been over at *five o'clock*. They probably at that time did not begin till between 2 and 3 o'clock.

* See the prologue to *King Henry VIII*," and that to "*Romeo and Juliet*."

† See the *Demoiselles Alamode* by FLECKNOX, 1667.

"1. Actor. Hark you, hark you, whither away so fast?

"2. Actor. Why to the Theatre, 'tis *past three o'clock* and the play is ready to begin."

After the restoration, (we are told by old Mr. CIBBER,) it was a frequent practice of the ladies of quality, to carry Mr. KYNASTON the actor, in his

The modes of conveyance to the theatre, anciently, as at present, seem to have been various ; some going in coaches; others on horseback, and many by water.*

female dress *after the play*, in these coaches to Hyde Park.

* In the year 1613, the company of watermen petitioned His Majesty "That the players might not be permitted to have a playhouse in London or in Middlesex, within 4 miles of the city on that side of the Thames." From TAYLOR's "*True cause of the Watermen's suit concerning Players, and the reasons that their playing on London side, is their [i.e. the Watermen's] extreme hindrance.*" We learn that the Theatres on the bank-side, in Southwark, were once so numerous, and the custom of going thither by water so general, that many thousand watermen were supported by it. As the book is not common, and the passage contains some anecdotes relative to the stage at that time, I shall transcribe it.

"Afterwards" [i.e. as I conjecture, about the year 1596] says TAYLOR, who was employed as an advocate in behalf of the watermen—"the players began to play on the *Bank-side*, and to leave playing in London or Middlesex *for the most part*. Then there went such a great concourse of people by water, that the small number of watermen remaining at home, [the majority being employed in the Spanish war], were not able to carry them, by reason of the Court, the terms and the players, and other employments, so that we were enforced and encouraged, hoping that this golden stirring world would have lasted for ever, to take and entertain men and boys, which boys are grown men, and keepers of houses ; so that the number of watermen and those that live and are maintained by them, and by the only labour of the oar and scull, betwixt the

To the *Globe* playhouse, the company probably were conveyed by water, to that in *Blackfriars*;^{*} the gentry

bridge of Windsor and Gravesend, cannot be fewer than *forty thousand*; the cause of the greater half of which multitude hath been the players playing on *the Bank-side*; for I have known three companies, besides the *bear baiting* at once there, to wit *the Globe, the Swan, and the Swan*.

"And now it hath pleased God in this peaceful time [from 1604 to 1613] that there is no employment at the sea, as it hath been accustomed, so that all those great numbers of men remains at home, and the players have all (except the kings men) left their usual residence on *the Bank-side*, and do play in Middlesex, far remote from the Thames; so that every day in the week they do draw unto them 3 or 4000 people that were used to spend their mornies by water.

"His Majesties players did exhibit a petition against us, in which they said our suit was unreasonable, and that we might as justly remove the Exchange, the walkes in Pauls, or Minchies, to the Bank-side, for our profits, as to confine them."

This affair appears never to have been decided. "Some (says TAYLOR) have reported that I took bribes of the players to let the suit fall, and to that purpose I had a supper of them at *the Cardinal's Hat*, on the Bank-side."

Works of Taylor, the Water Poet, p. 171, edit. 1633.

* See a letter from Mr. GARRARD to LORD STRAFFORD, dated, Jan. 9, 1633-4; STRAFFORD'S *Letters*, Vol. 1, p. 175.—"Here hath been an order of the Lords in Council hung up in a table near *Paul's* and the *Black Fryars* to command all that resort to the playhouse, there to send away their *coaches*, and to disperse abroad in *Paul's Church-yard*, *Carter Lane*, *the Conduit*, in *Fleet-street*, and other places, and not to return to fetch

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went either in coaches, or on horseback ; and the common people on foot.*

Plays in the time of King JAMES I. (and probably afterwards) appear to have been performed every day, at each theatre, during the winter season,† except in the time of Lent, when they were not permitted on *Sermon days*, as they were called, that is on Wednesday and Friday ; nor on the other days of the week, except by special licence : which, however, was obtained, by a fee paid to the master of the revels.

their company ; but they must trot a foot to find their *coaches* ;—'twas kept very strictly for two or three weeks, but now I think it is disordered again."—It should, however, be remembered that this was written above forty years after SHAKESPEARE's first acquaintance with the Theatre. Coaches in the time of Queen Elizabeth, were possessed but very few. They were not in ordinary use till after the year 1605.

See STOWE's *Annals*, p. 867.

* In an Epigram, by Sir JOHN DAVIES, persons of an inferior rank, are ridiculed for presuming to imitate noblemen and gentlemen in riding to the Theatre.

"Faustus, nor lord, nor knight, nor wise, nor old,
To every place about the town doth ride ;
He *rides* into the fields, *plays* to behold,
He *rides* to take boat at the water side."

Epigrams, printed at Middleburgh, about 1598.

† See TAYLOR's *Suit of the Watermen, &c. Works*, p. 171 : "But my love is such to them, [the players] that whereas they do play but once a day, I should be content they should play twice or thrice a day. The players have all [except the King's men] left their usual residence on the Bank-side, and do play in Middlesex, far remote from the Thames, so that *every day in the week* they draw 4000 people, &c."—*Ibid.*

In the summer season, the stage exhibitions were continued, but during the long vacation, they were less frequently repeated. However it appears, from Sir HENRY HERBERTS, M.S. that the King's Company usually brought out two or three new plays at the *Globe* every summer.

Though from the want of newspapers, and other periodical publications, intelligence was not so speedily circulated in former times, as at present, our ancient Theatres do not appear to have laboured under any disadvantage in this respect; for the players printed and exposed accounts of the pieces that they intended to exhibit,* which, however, did not contain a list of

* "They use to sett up their billes upon postes some certaine days before, to admonish the people to make resort to their Theatres, that they may thereby be the better furnished, and the people prepared to fill their purses with their treasures."

See "*Treatise against Idleness, vaine plays and interludes*," (no date.)

The antiquity of this custom, likewise appears from a story recorded by the *Water Poet*, under the head of *Wis and Mirth*. "Master FIELD, the player, riding up Fleet-street at a great pace, a gentleman called him and asked him what was played that day. He being angry to be stayed on so frivolous a demand, answered that he might see what play was played upon every *poste*. I cry your mercy, said the gentleman, I took you for a *poste*, you rode so faste. TAYLOR's *Works*, 183.

AMES, in his "*History of Printing*," p. 342, says that JAMES ROBERTS, [who published some of SHAKESPEARE's dramas] printed *bills for the players*.

It appears from the following entry on the stationers books, that even the right of printing play-bills, was at one time made a subject of monopoly.

"Oct. 1587, JOHN CHARLEWOOD, lycensed to him

the characters, or the names of the actors, by whom they were represented.*

The long and whimsical titles, which are prefixed to the quarto copies of SHAKSPEARE's plays, were undoubtedly written by booksellers, or transcribed from the play-bills of the time. They were equally calculated to attract the notice of the idle gazer, in the walks at St. Paul's, or to draw a crowd about some vociferous *Autolycus*, who perhaps, was hired by the players thus to raise the expectations of the multitude. It is indeed absurd to suppose that the modest SHAKSPEARE, who has more than once apologized for his "*untutored lines*," should in his M.SS. have entitled any of his dramas "*most excellente and pleassant*" performances:

by the whole consent of the assistants, the *only* ymprinting of all manner of *billes for players*. Provided that, if any trouble arise herebye, then CHARLEWOOD to beare the charges."

* This practice did not commence till the beginning of the present century. I have seen a play-bill, printed in 1697, which expressed only the titles of the 2 pieces that were to be exhibited, and the time they were to be represented. Notices of plays to be performed on a future day, similar to those now daily published, first appeared in the original edition of the "*Spectator*," in 1711. In these early theatrical advertisements our author is always styled "*the immortal SHAKSPEARE*." Hence POPE:

"SHAKSPEARE, whom you and every *playhouse bill*,
Style the *divine*, the matchless, what you will."

THE END.

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